

# A PATTERN FOR LIFE

A Talk by

JULIUS STULMAN

Earlham College  
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## PREFACE

The following address, given before the students and faculty of Earlham College, has been printed at the request of many of the hearers. The hope is that the printed form may enable those who heard the address to study it carefully and to share it with others.

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## A PATTERN FOR LIFE

For many of you what I am going to say this morning will be different, new, perhaps even strange. My approach to many of the basic concerns of life is not commonly understood as a traditional one. You will see that as we go along.

In the meantime may I ask you to sit back, to relax, to forget yourselves—and particularly to forget for the moment the labels, the symbols, the semantic shorthand we use so often in talking about life and the deeper things of the spirit. Frankly, I am asking you, whatever the nature of your belief or disbelief, to open your mind and to re-think with me some of the basic, eternal questions which, in moments of quiet, we all must face, and to think of them outside the mechanics of dogma and sectarianism. I don't ask you to accept what I have to say, but I hope you will be willing to make the search with me to the end that within your own reference frame you will get a clearer view of what we trust is truth.

For many of us—perhaps most of us—it is a difficult thing to talk naturally and directly about religion and about God now in the middle of the Twentieth Century. The words are archaic, the ideas seem hazy and obscure, the rituals appear to be empty forms. And on the surface at least there are so many different brands of religion that the independent inquiring mind may grow confused and cynical about the whole issue.

What we have to remember is that every group must funnel the experiences of life through its own special pattern. It uses its own special vocabulary. It adapts religion to its own traditions and social forms. Man—forgive him—is forever trying to create God in his own image. And the image of man varies infinitely from age to age, from culture to culture.

Yet, despite all our fumbling efforts, the search for some ultimate truth goes on in every age, in every race, in every culture. There is something in man which drives him into asking questions about himself and about the universe beyond him, about the things he can see and hear and touch and about the things which are beyond his powers of sense perception. This very capacity to ask such questions is one of the principal things which distinguishes man from the animals. It is his most precious ability.

This morning I want us to try to state a few of those most basic questions and to examine, as best we can, how intelligent, rational,

honest people — with the facts and insights available to us — could go about trying to find the answers.

I should like to suggest that there are four major questions which man asks himself in the area of religion and philosophy, to which he returns again and again through the ages. Those questions are:

One, What is the nature of man?

Two, What is the nature of the universe around man?

Three, What is the most satisfactory basis for man's relation to man?

Four, What is the most satisfactory basis for man's adjustment to the universe?

I suppose we could put the questions even more simply:

Who am I?

Where am I?

Now that I'm here, what do I do — and what can I become?

Doesn't that just about cover everything?

Now, right here, let me say that I am not presuming to pass out answers to these broad queries. These are questions we have to live with and struggle over. Nobody is likely to come to a state of understanding and wisdom on these matters on the basis of somebody else's ready-made answers. What I do want to do is to suggest an *approach* by which we can seek the answers. And that requires, of course, some reference to the various approaches men commonly take to these questions.

It doesn't matter whether people always state the question or frame the answer or carry a label. By the way they live their lives they give their own answers. By their lives they reveal their approach.

I suppose it would be accurate to say that most men, most of the time, take an animalistic approach to life. They are concerned almost exclusively with food, clothing and shelter; with self-preservation and reproduction. Most of them accept this as normal and natural without giving it a thought. Some, of course, even dress up this behavior in a rational philosophy.

They take the position that to eat, drink and be merry is all that man requires; that to learn how to satisfy our physical senses is all we can know and all we need to know. There are such people — unfortunately a lot of them — in every age and in every culture. They are the hedonists. Consciously or unconsciously they devote

themselves to a search for pleasure and believe the acquisition of happiness, as defined by these sense satisfactions, is the answer to life.

Now the people who take this view of life are not necessarily bad. You have nothing to say to them if you merely stand on a pedestal and, with Puritan pride and sternness, condemn them as evil. Most of them are simply immature.

Let us be honest with ourselves: there is a lot of the animal and of the hedonist in all of us, certainly in all of us at some stage in our development. This is part of our elementary primitive nature. We are endowed with certain animal drives and hungers. We are at birth self-centered and we remain so for a long time. We are wrapped up in our desires and want them satisfied. Those desires are designed to guarantee our survival and the continuation of the species. But they are only part of life; they are not the whole. When we make them the whole—we pervert, we harm, we block our future growth—we eventually destroy life.

When man responds to those drives to excess, merely out of self-indulgence, he is behaving like a child. If this is all he sees to life, then he never grows up. The hedonistic pattern of life—though it is probably the pattern of most people at some given time—is not enough. Man is not just a clever, pleasure-seeking animal. He is something far, far, greater.

Through the ages we have had example after example of what men can and do become. We know something of the heights to which man can rise: intellectually, artistically, spiritually. The achievements of every great civilization are monuments that mark the ascent of man above the level of his mere animal nature. Or look around you at the people you admire. The chances are that most of them are people who have achieved some distinction of personal quality, skill, knowledge or ability. Whom do we venerate? The great souls, the great teachers, the men and women who have attained a degree of internal harmony, of maturity that enables them to reach beyond the narrow, self-centered animal-patterned life. And there *is* something, something down inside us—a conscience, an inner voice, a spiritual sense—which tells us we are capable of becoming something better and finer than we have been up to now.

Sometimes I like to think of the human being as symbolized by a big round rubber ball. The outer cover of that ball is, let us say, a hard, gummy substance five or six inches thick, pieced together in segments of different colors, but forming a smooth rounded surface. This outer covering is made up of the protective

mechanisms — the acquisitive drives, the appetites for food and sex, the tendency toward combativeness and self-defense.

These surface manifestations of life, so long as they remain in balance, fulfill their function. They provide a protective covering to life. Yet in exaggeration they become our evils — lust, greed, war. When any of those segments begins to grow to excess you get a lop-sided ball which will not roll straight and will not bounce high and true. And, worst of all, the excess growth of those surface segments of life presses in upon and crushes the vital and delicate mechanism on the inside. For we must not forget that the protective covering is there to protect something other than itself. Hunger is not there just to stimulate and feed hunger. The sex urge is not there just to stimulate and satisfy itself. These basic drives we are born with and they are there to serve, to protect, to perpetuate a whole life.

The ball we are talking about is not *empty*. On the inside (as we develop to look within ourselves), we find we have a whole chemist's laboratory with long rows of bottles connected to glass tubes and tilting at different angles to pour their ingredients into a central funnel. Let us say Bottle Number One is love. Number Two is industry. Number Four is integrity. Number Six is personality, and so on. The way the bottles are tilted determines the compound.

You do not want those surface segments of life, those appetites, desires and protective impulses to press in upon your inner chemist's laboratory and destroy any of those precious bottles or upset some of them in such a way as to create a poison dose. To prevent that, you want to strive for discipline and a sense of maturity.

But there is another and perhaps even greater danger. Suppose you do develop a discipline of the basic urges. You keep those outer segments from pressing in, choking or crushing the inner resources of your life. But you may let your mind and will get you into trouble. You may say that by taking sufficient thought, by putting forth sufficient effort, you should be able to figure out how to tip some of those bottles to produce in a hurry and in an unnatural way a magic formula which will bring you wealth or fame or popularity. There comes the danger. For in your hurry to attain your specialized goal, by tipping Bottles Two, Four and Six so that they flow twice as fast as normally, by doubling the flow of industriousness — working within reason or beyond; integrity — real or apparent, personality — real or apparent, you may create the formula that will win your fortune, but you may lose your life. For the sake of rapid, spectacular results you may throw

away the opportunity to build a really significant and whole, harmonious life. You spoil the pattern, you break the orderly sequence of proper development that would open all the bottles for you in time.

On the other hand, if you maintain the right sequence, if you grow in terms of a whole pattern, then you are integrating and building something new; you are creating a life.

In a sense this is at the heart of what I want to say. The key to the nature of man, the key to the nature of the universe, the key to the relationship of man to man and to the universe, I believe, lies in this concept of pattern construction. Perhaps I should say pattern molded by purpose — an evolving, growing, expanding pattern.

There is nothing wrong with being a child; everybody starts out as a child. The unnatural, the abnormal, the life-destroying thing is to *remain* a child. There is nothing wrong with eating; it is good to eat. Yet the man who makes himself a glutton interferes with his total functioning as a whole human being, and becomes a pretty dull fellow to have around.

Someday you will be parents and when you are you will probably read Gesell and other books on child psychology. And they will do you a lot of good. The chief good they will do you is to reassure you that your child is normal. When three-year old Johnny says "No" to every single thing you ask him to do, you get worried. Then you look in the book and it says that one of the most common characteristics of Three is to say, "No." Now, if Johnny keeps on saying "No" all the time when he gets to be five and six and seven, then you know you have a case of arrested development, a case of psychological maladjustment of some kind on your hands, and you'd better get some expert help to deal with it. But on the whole, if you have been a reasonably wise parent, you will discover that one phase follows another as the personality and character of the child unfold. The child is constantly forming and changing and forming again new patterns of behavior. But the point I particularly want to make is this: growth and development are not just a process of childhood. They are basic to life, to all life.

Man is a creature in the process of becoming. This is true of the individual here and now. It is true of the species over the long history of human evolution. This is obvious for the past. I believe it is just as true for the future. The future of man's development lies not, however, in acquiring a third eye or a sixth finger or wings. The pattern of his continued evolution must lie in the realm of mental and spiritual development. In order to attain that de-

velopment he must see himself as still being in process. He has come a long way — from one pattern to a higher pattern to a still higher pattern of life — but there is a continuum beyond this present stage.

This thinking about the nature of man, I believe, can make a profound difference in our approach to life. It can have an effect upon the way we assume our individual responsibilities and upon our social attitudes. It is our nature to grow. When we stop growing we have begun already to die. The pity is that so many, needlessly, die so very young.

What I have been saying about the nature of individual man applies, I believe, to human society. Through the centuries men have come together in families, in clans, in villages, in tribes, in duchies, in kingdoms — and now finally in the nation-states. Each stage of social evolution had its purpose and function and value. Some of those stages have and will continue to have great and primary value.

The family is a basic unit in society. It must be preserved and protected and strengthened. The same applies to various community groupings. The same, I dare say, applies to the nation. But we know that these patterns are not enough to encompass all of our social relationships today. We have to have some kind of pattern for a world society. We have to find some process for bringing all men together in sufficiently close cooperation all over the world so that the nation-states do not destroy each other.

But let's go back and look behind these various types of social patterns for just a moment. The family pattern is not a static thing. In some cultures and in some particular situations the family is a totalitarian dictatorship. Life for most of its members may be full of repression and control. In other cases it can be a wonderful experience of cooperative democracy. In others it may simply be bedlam and anarchy. The thing that makes the difference will not be the race, the color, the economic station, the nationality, the label — but the pattern a group of people set together.

And within any given family the pattern doesn't stay the same. As with the individual, it too must grow richer and deeper, or it also begins to die.

In the evolution of nationality groups and nation-states various cultural, social, economic and political values have been created. Why shouldn't a person feel a sense of kinship with his native land, a certain pride in being an Englishman, or a German or a Russian or an Indian or an American. For all the terrible mistakes the people and their leaders may have made in each case, there are

still achievements and values to be associated with the nationality pattern.

The challenge to us is not to destroy a small, local or national social pattern in order to create a larger one; the challenge is to find ways of knitting together all these social patterns that continue to have real meaning and function, to improve them as we go along, and to build new ones to fit the changing needs of a dynamic society. Just as each individual has his own physical appearance, capacity, personality and inherent right to live and develop, so does each community have the right to protect and perpetuate the best of its own local community achievements, traditions and customs. We want *universal* man, but we do not want *uniform* man.

Among the most destructive forces abroad in the world today are those forces which seek to create *uniform* man. This is the purpose of the Communists and the Fascists. Each of these groups has first of all created a pattern which is fixed and rigid. It claims to have arrived at the ultimate truth about social, political and economic organization, and that pattern must not be questioned or tampered with. All lesser social patterns must be remade to conform to the totalitarian super-pattern or be destroyed. All the facts of history and current life must be altered to fit that special theory. This is the one true politics, the one true pseudo-religion.

Having discovered this fixed, neatly-blocked-out pattern, the Communist feels he must convert all men to accept it. And since they can't all be converted willingly or by deceit and propaganda, they must in the end be compelled into conversion. Hence the secret police, the concentration camps and all the other evil trapplings of the totalitarian dictatorship.

You ask if Communism will eventually be destroyed? Of course it will be destroyed. It won't fail because men can't be made to produce in a communistic society. It won't fail just because of inefficiency and a low standard of living. It *may* not fail until after it has brought far greater suffering upon the world than the world has yet known. But fail it eventually must, because there is a basic law of human society which says fixed, rigid, self-serving patterns must destroy themselves.

The family which makes itself the final social end for its members will be eliminated or crushed. It must adjust itself and subordinate at least some of its interests to the community or it's going to be restrained and coerced by the community. The nation which undertakes to run rough-shod over other nations will eventually create so strong a coalition against itself as to bring on its

own defeat. Napoleonic France and Hitler Germany are but two examples. And any ideology, any socio-economic pattern which undertakes to impose itself upon the whole world will bring on its own destruction.

Growth, change, advancement are basic to life. This is as true for a social order as for an individual. A system which crushes opposition, stifles individuality, imposes uniformity on men's minds, spirits and actions — that system will destroy itself.

But let us not sit back with any sense of smugness and pride, we of the Western democracies. We, too, must be on guard against the temptation to deify our present social, political and economic status as the ultimate in social evolution. It just isn't. The moment we think it is, *that* moment is our time of greatest peril. Democracy as we know it is not perfected, and it never will be. But seen as a process, a state of becoming, democracy is worth working at with great energy and devotion.

We have made an enormous success in the Western world with our skills at tool making. We have amassed great wealth and great power. Yet we cannot take our ease, sitting on top of our pyramid. There are hundreds of millions of people in the so-called backward areas of the world who are hungry and sick, who lack our skills and wealth. If they are envious and antagonistic towards us, we should not be surprised. They want to catch up with us. They feel they are as intelligent as we are, as clever — potentially, as skillful. And they are.

The great question is shall we help them catch up with us so we can go forward together, or will they pull us back to them so that we go down together. Forget for the moment the passing "isms" — Nazism, fascism, communism. The *real* struggle of the Twentieth Century is actually over *how* the tools, the skills, the resources, the knowledge, the manpower of the whole world will be knit together for the benefit of the whole world, and *who* is to do that job. We are seized by a gigantic convulsion which will either result in the birth of a broader, sounder new world pattern or will bring destruction and chaos for perhaps a thousand years.

The leaders of the Soviet Union are trying, and with great effectiveness, to exploit this situation. All across the world they are posing as the champions of the backward peoples, as the source of the strength and the knowledge needed to unite the world. If they could really do that job and we couldn't, perhaps we ought to step aside and let them. But they can't. The lust for power among their leaders is now plain for all the world to see. They stopped their personal growth at a low plain of individual develop-

ment. More than that, their plan for the world is not in harmony with the laws of social advancement. They are offering to put the world in a straight-jacket, and that simply can't be done—not for long. They don't understand process. They don't understand the changing, growing, evolving nature of individual and social pattern-making.

We in the West must get that understanding. We have the tools, the wealth, the power. If we can only see that we cannot go ahead any farther, we cannot even hold what we have, unless we are willing to help the others come ahead with us (and this means changing ourselves so we can help) then this job of knitting together the world can be done, in peace and done well.

The problem is to relate a thorough knowledge of ourselves and our society and the processes by which we grow to the tools and materials and facts of the outside world, not to be obsessed with the tools and the facts themselves. The problem is to see man, to see him as part of a common brotherhood, and to see him in relation to the universe.

The truth is that man does not live in a void. He lives inside a great intelligence, he partakes of that intelligence. The order and harmony and pattern in man reflects in resonance the harmony and pattern of the universe around him. Check this thinking against any field of knowledge you like. Take astronomy.

The more gigantic the telescopes we build the more the astronomers probe the heavens, the more staggering becomes their picture of the universe. The earth is only one small speck in this solar system and there are many solar systems in this particular galaxy. And there are, we are told, galaxies beyond galaxies beyond our own. In fact, the astronomers suspect more are being created all the time. The immenseness of the space-time-mass-energy involved in all this so-called "expanding universe" is beyond man's capacity to describe. And yet there is order and pattern in the whole vast astronomical scheme of things. The important thing is not the number of the stars, or their distance from each other, but the pattern of their relationship. It must be pointed out, however, that though there is order and harmony, the pattern is changing constantly. For example, in another 250,000 years you won't be able to recognize the constellations you now spot in the heavens at night. They will all have different patterns. (Wait around and see.)

Or look to the universe of atomic and molecular structure. Nobody has ever seen a molecule or an atom, yet we know they exist, and we have learned how to describe their structure. We know that the atom consists of one or more electrons, protons and

neutrons organized into a minute invisible solar system of its own, with electrons moving around the nucleus like the earth around the sun. Depending upon the pattern in which those neutrons, protons and electrons come together — the field they create — we get every element known to man. What is the key to the vast differences that exist? Pattern, structure — which in turn means field created by that pattern. Therefore, we can say that nothing exists but fields in complex, balanced inter-relationships.

Or take the cells of the body. We know that the body is made up of millions of minute cells arranged one on top of another. Why aren't we then simply masses of flabby goo? How does it happen that we have hair and eyes and limbs and a heart and a brain? The cells have been grouped together in different patterns to produce the different organs. And what lies behind the different patterns? Purpose and function.

In the evolution of animal structure not all organs developed at the same time. The brain of man came quite late. Yet at each stage there was a meaningful pattern. There was purpose and function for the organism at each point in its development. But it was the nature of the life force that all cells were not to remain at the same original level, but to grow, to divide, to become differentiated, and to group themselves together into larger and larger patterns.

Now it is also very interesting that as these cells evolved from the amoeba stage upward they became more dependent on each other. They had to form cooperative fields, determined by their continuously changing patterns, in order to live. The new structure thus created was more than the sum of the original parts. It was all the parts plus — plus the new field created by the new structure or pattern.

We live in an orderly, purposeful universe. Our very bodies are amazing demonstrations of physical order, harmony, cooperation. Our social relations that persist must be built up in terms of meaningful structure. We live within an inter-linking structure of patterns that taken together make a reference frame for our lives.

Let's examine that idea of a reference frame for a moment. Let us say that there is a certain frame around everybody's life. That frame consists of his inherited structure, his social setting, the cultural tradition of which he is a part, the climate, the geography and a whole complex of external forces from the universe around him which bear in upon him, whether he is conscious of them or not. Within this frame, he is constantly making and remaking some kind of picture. The colors may be bright, they may be dull. The

lines may be simple and clean cut or they may be fuzzy and blurred. The canvas may be relatively empty or it may be cluttered. Regardless of all these things, at any given time within that reference frame there is some kind of picture.

As the painter of our own picture we add a new idea here and there, a dash of fresh color in one corner, we extend a bold line across the background, we refine certain details in the foreground. We change, we re-arrange, but at all times, if we are sane, we are striving to produce a certain internal harmony and unity of pattern within that frame. We can make these changes, corrections, additions because we are working in oils and we have tubes of all the conceivable colors available to us. If we were working in water colors, it would be quite different. A few swift brush strokes and the pattern would be fixed, the picture would be set. We would either have made it, or we would have failed.

Working with oils is another matter. We have an almost infinite number of opportunities to correct, to add to, and even to start over.

But that isn't all. The canvas on which we paint is not fixed, limited — because the reference frame around it is expandable. That is the most wonderful thing about our picture. Sooner or later we face a decision — symbolically the opportunity to introduce into our picture some great new idea or experience, a figure, a mountain peak that would push right through where the old frame was. To do so, however, would throw our little picture out of balance. What do we do? Right here is the secret most people miss. If we accept the challenge of that great new idea boldly, if we inject into our picture the large new element we can visualize, we shall find that we can enlarge the whole picture. We can and must then re-draw the old elements that were worthwhile in our old picture to be in balance and harmony with the new. For we have enlarged our canvas by taking in some of the previously unknown. By will and decision we have enlarged our reference frame. We suddenly have created a whole new set of value relationships through accepting the challenge of a new and worthwhile experience.

We have thus been enabled to create a new harmony on a larger scale. The fact of this expansion, this growth, is the important thing, not the details inside the frame at any given moment. We are not frozen to a particular pattern or color scheme because at one moment we drew in young green leaves of a certain form and size. Leaves change size and color with the passing of time and circumstance. To point the moral: do not remain the prisoner of facts; strive to become the master of principle, process, pattern.

The expanding frame of our lives, we must remember, however, is not concerned just with giving our individual canvas a chance to enlarge itself. It is also concerned with establishing a linkage with what lies beyond the reference frame. With merging harmoniously into the great wall to which it belongs, with catching and reflecting back something of the sunlight that falls upon the picture, with blending in with the other pictures which hang in the great gallery of the universe.

In our search for truth we must concern ourselves primarily with direction, pattern, process, purpose. Truth is a goal toward which we move, but which we never finally, completely reach. As we come nearer to the truth, it expands. We too must expand and grow. We cannot place arbitrary and artificial limitations upon the universe. And we must find ways to use our capacity to extend our reference frame, to grow into greater understanding of the universe and greater effectiveness in that tiny segment of the universe where we live and move and have our being.

How do we do that? First of all, by integrating our inner selves, then by integrating ourselves with our fellow men — sharing actively in the common burdens and responsibilities and opportunities of mankind, then by working to integrate our own pattern and the pattern of our society with the pattern of the universe. And how do we do all that? My answer is, through what we call Religion.

Religion, as I see it, is a methodology for knitting together our own individual patterns and relating those individual patterns to the great design of the universe, for reminding us that we are in "process of becoming" and that it is our function to grow and develop.

Over the centuries many different religions have sprung up and around them countless doctrines, dogmas, rituals and practices have come into being. Over the differences horrible wars have been fought and great cruelties have been carried out. Fortunately, we are now able to be loyal to our own sectarian views and groups without the necessity of doing violence to our neighbor who sees things differently. And fortunately too we seem to be moving, however slowly, toward a common understanding of the meaning of certain basic religious ideas and practices. If we can look at ourselves and at the universe in the terms of pattern and process as we have been discussing this morning I am sure that common understanding will be hastened.

Prayer is at the heart of all meaningful religion because it is a process by which we can integrate our lives — integrate our abilities, our knowledge, our sensitivities, our hopes and ideals into a

harmonious pattern. It is a means by which we can reach out and bring ourselves and our own personal pattern into touch with the great patterns of the universe.

God does not need our prayers. We need our prayers. We need to live in a constant attitude of prayerfulness. We need to stretch ourselves forward at all times to catch, in resonance, the wave lengths which emanate from a divine pattern of mercy, orderliness, harmony, justice and love in the universe around us. Prayer helps us to tune in on the right wave lengths, which we can receive as we are prepared to receive.

This room is filled with an infinite number of waves — aside from those which we here are sending out. We do not feel them. Yet we know they are here. Bring in a receiving set, tune the dials to a given wave length and you hear the particular sounds going out in that particular pattern — perhaps from some person on the other side of the earth.

I conceive of the world of the spirit in some such terms as that. There is a pattern of order and purposefulness in the universe. It is broadcast through the heavens to all men, in all ages, in all conditions. Man's task is to seek to set his own pattern in harmony with the great design of God's universe, to draw strength from it, and to relay it to others. Prayer can give man an awareness of that universal pattern. It can help man to knit together his own pattern so that he may receive.

But *how* does he go forward on the basis of the pattern prayer helps him to fashion? He goes forward by Faith. Have Faith and Ye shall get to know God, said the prophet. It was true in Biblical times. It is true today. The truth can not all be trapped and held in the hands. Much of it must be taken on faith.

Faith is the act of projecting yourself into the unknown, of going forward to meet the future in the assurance that it is the pattern and the process that count, not the facts of the moment. Faith is navigating by the stars instead of by the passing waves that roll and toss your boat.

The waves are very near and present facts. You can see them and feel them. That star up there may not even exist any more. It may have been extinguished a thousand light years ago. But what counts is a pattern in the heavens of which the light from that star is a part.

You cannot steer your life by the transient waves of the moment. You can steer your life by the star of faith.

God, I can imagine, is not greatly interested in whether you quit work one day in seven, or one in 365. God does not require

your periodic idleness to be pleased with you. Yet the day of rest exists for a purpose. That purpose is to help man escape from the clutches of the material pressures of life, to sort out in his mind what is important from what is unimportant, to give him time to integrate himself, to exercise his pattern-making equipment, to improve and extend his basic pattern, to adjust his pattern to be more in sympathetic resonance with God's order in the universe.

Seen in this light, does Sabbath observance make sense — even now in the Twentieth Century? I think it does. In this frantic age, a day of rest, of meditation, of prayer, of worship, of searching and seeking, makes as much sense as it ever did in the whole history of man.

There is another law of life that deserves examination here. This is the law which says that creation requires sacrifice and giving.

In ancient times, in many parts of the world, there was the practice of offering sacrifices — of fruits, vegetables, of sheep and fatted calves. Now, I am sure God did not want or need those sacrifices. It was, however, a way man could learn a basic lesson about the universe — the lesson of giving.

We do not make sacrificial offerings on a smoking altar any more. But the doctrine of giving of ourselves, our time, our energy, our resources to others and for others — that again is a basic truth that religion seeks to teach us. However, we must understand that this is but one step of the way and must not be taken for the whole.

“Give and ye shall receive.”

“Surrender the old pattern and ye shall create the new.”

“Repent and ye shall be forgiven.”

If all this is true — and it is — why don't we see it? Why don't we live by it?

I have at least a tentative answer. The old order, the old pattern will not give up anything of its identity, of its sovereignty, of itself, until it can see that its sacrifice is in the interest of a greater good, a broader pattern, of which, at least in essence, it can still be a part. And it wants to know, further, that there is a meaningful, harmonious, knitting together of the various patterns as they make mutual sacrifices and come together. It wants to know that there is still further growth and development of a greater whole ahead which will in return bring benefit to the original specie or pattern. Otherwise, why should any cell, any desire, any individual, any tribe, or any nation give up anything?

It won't. The process of growth is the process of giving up something of the lower order to achieve a somewhat higher order which

in turn gives up something of itself to achieve a still higher order—and yet which still preserves the essential value of each along the way. The struggle, the crisis at each stage of advancement, is to determine whether the new structure being created can in fact knit together the various component patterns in balance and harmony and give back to each component more than it originally had. The whole must be more than the sum of its parts, and each component part must be more than its fractional percentage of the whole. We get by giving. This is a law of the universe.

We have to share new values which we can create together. We don't just try to redistribute the old existing values. We create new values by injecting a new idea into our picture, by taking in something of the unknown, by extending our reference frame. Now everything in our picture must be enlarged to be in balance with the new value. And then we share what we have thus created with others.

We do not solve anything by robbing Peter to pay Paul. We don't create value just by re-shuffling the old goods and the old values in the same old fixed frame.

We don't necessarily help the basic situation just by blindly giving away what one person has to someone else. What we are after is the kind of purposeful giving up of an old narrow value for a broader new value. This quality can only come in the continuous process—development of the individual—through the extension of his imagination and creative ability. This means being in touch with the universal intelligence.

Sacrifice is not the obliteration of self. It is the refining and extension of self toward a oneness with all mankind and a oneness with the universe. Sacrifice, properly understood, is not destructive; it is creative.

The reverse of all this is idolatry and evil. What is idolatry? Idolatry is taking the part for the whole, it is taking a fixed position and staying there, it is glorifying the passing phase as the permanent pattern.

What is evil?

Evil is anything which blocks growth and development, which interferes with the knitting together of patterns to make a higher new pattern.

What is good?

Good is anything which promotes growth, which helps pattern-making, which encourages meaningful sacrifice, which leads toward new creation.

What is truth?

Truth is the wisdom and understanding which shows us that facts and fixed positions are meaningless and that the *only* reality is process, purpose, direction, pattern, field.

What is religion?

Religion is the means by which we reach out, through prayer and faith, toward an integration of our lives with that truth.

What it all comes down to I think can be said very briefly and simply. We live in an orderly, purposeful universe which operates according to growing, evolving patterns—from the atom to the living cell to the human being to the galaxy a hundred thousand light years across. We are akin to everything that exists in this universe. The challenge to us is to integrate ourselves within ourselves; then, as integrated, whole beings to work to harmonize and unify our society and, beyond that, to seek to integrate ourselves and our society with the universe.

That work will have to go on for a very long time, but it is the kind of high adventure to which we are called, the kind of adventure which can give meaning, purpose and nobility to our life on this earth. And every single one of us is called to participate in that adventure and must do so if he really wants to live.

JULIUS STULMAN

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